

Floor Discussion

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The first paper, presented by Clyde Tucker, discussed a statistical analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnic Origin. The central issues in the paper were the multiracial category, combining Hispanic origin and race, concepts of race, ethnicity, ancestry, terminology preferences and new classifications. The CPS supplement on race included four panels, each treating race and ethnicity differently. The paper concluded that persons of Hispanic origin prefer a racial category and the size of the Hispanic population will be larger if a separate question is used. Also, the size of the White, as well as the American Indian/Alaska native population, will be smaller if Hispanic is included as a race. The paper further concluded that Mexican-Americans will be a larger proportion of the Hispanic population if race and ethnicity are asked in a single question. Cubans were found to behave differently on the race question than other persons of Hispanic origin. The paper concluded that the degree of assimilation could interact with treatment effects.

The second paper, “Interpreting the Findings of the Statistical Analysis of the CPS Supplement on Race and Ethnicity”, was presented by Ruth McKay. The paper addressed the cognitive research activities used to pre-test the CPS Supplement. Interviews were conducted in 9 locations, totaling 83 interviews. Activities performed during cognitive research were field observation, behavior coding of CATI interviews, content analyses of open-ended answers to “Something else” racial entries for multiracial respondents and also content analysis of open-ended answers to ancestry question for single race and multiracial respondents were performed. Some of the findings regarding multiracial reporting were that some “observer-classified” multiracial persons did not always self-report as “multiracial” while some “observer-classified” single race persons reported as multiracial. For some persons, race and ethnic group are overlapping concepts.

A question from the floor concerned the various mixes of race, for example, what is considered a mix and how many generations back should be considered? Nampeo McKenney referred to the 1980 and 1990 Census Content Reinterview, which asked the origin of parents back as far as possible and also asked about language spoken.

Another question asked if there were plans to have the race and ethnicity question combined. Nampeo McKenney, Bureau of Census, replied that our test does include a combined race and Hispanic origin question which also allows persons to check more than one box. She further explained that we also ask the questions separately and we asked them in reverse order.

The Floor questioned how people conceptualized the term Hispanic and the various ways in which it could be viewed. Ruth McKay responded that persons of Hispanic origin know what the term means; however, some non-Hispanic persons may be confused on the term.